

♪ Worship Notes ♪

Volume 2, Number 9 ♪ September 2007

THEME: Worship and Missions

God's Global Purpose

Obviously our ultimate purpose in serving God in this world must be to align ourselves with *His* purpose for this world. I would suggest that God's purpose is summarized (among other places in Scripture) in Psalm 86:9:

*All nations whom You
have made
Shall come and worship
before You, O Lord,
And they shall glorify
Your name.*

Here we read that God created the nations (or peoples); and the clear implication is that He has every right to expect their worship, their glorification of Him as their Creator. But not only is this an expectation, but also a clear prediction that this will happen (see also Psalm 22:27-28). The thrust of history and of the Church and of missions is towards that day when a countless throng of worshipers "from every tribe and tongue and people and nation" (Revel. 5:9) will join the angelic host around the throne to exclaim, "To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever!" (5:13). Right now "missions exists because worship doesn't," but at that future

**Missions is not
the ultimate
purpose of the
church. Worship
is. Missions exists
because worship
doesn't.
(John Piper)**

point "missions will be no more. It is a temporary necessity. But worship abides forever" (John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad: The Supremacy of God in Missions*, 11).

This certainty is thankfully not dependent on our faithfulness or stamina—rather God condescends to use us in His global purpose of gathering worshipers to the glory of His

name. May we never forget that the purpose and its completion are God's responsibility! As Piper points out:

It is possible to be distracted from God in trying to serve God. Martha-like, we neglect the one thing needful, and soon begin to present God as busy and fretful. A.W. Tozer warned us about this: 'We commonly represent God as a busy, eager, somewhat frustrated Father hurrying about seek-

ing help to carry out His benevolent plan to bring salvation and peace to the world. . . . Too many missionary appeals are based upon this fancied frustration of Almighty God' (Let the Nations Be Glad, 13).

Seeing worship as the ultimate purpose and end of the Church, and therefore of missions, is not special pleading for the superiority of one "department" in the church over all others. Worship in its broadest biblical understanding, as the totality of our response

to the glory of God, is something much bigger than church music, than worship services, than the Church itself, than even this world. But worship must indeed be central to all of them, because it is central to God's purpose, as Psalm 86:9 clearly demonstrates.

Evangelism must ultimately be understood as an invitation to men and women to become worshipers of a great and glorious God through the redeeming work of His Son. The goal of evangelism is to quite simply to win more worshipers to glorify His name (because He is worthy of it, and because that was His purpose in making the nations and redeeming mankind). To the Apostle Paul, evangelism was also in itself an act of worship: "For God, whom I serve [or worship] in my spirit in the preaching of the gospel of his Son, is my witness . . ." (Rom 1:9). Paul also considered it to be a spiritual offering of worship for him to present new Gentile converts to God (Rom 15:16).

Another way of looking at this concept is to see the Great Commandment (Matt 22:35-40) as primary, and the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20) as a hugely important means to that even greater end. Along the lines of Piper's thinking, we can see that the love for God enjoined in the Great Commandment is vertical in its focus, purely God-centered and -directed, and is eternal in its scope; the Great Commission, on the other hand, is by definition man-centered and -directed and "a temporary necessity." In addition, when we consider that the culmination of the discipleship process involves "teaching them to obey all that [Jesus] commanded [them]" (28:20), we should take note that, according to Jesus Himself, the most important of those commanded things is in fact *the Great Commandment*. Hence when taken to its ulti-

The Great Commission is a hugely important *means* to an even greater *end*: the Great Commandment

mate conclusion, the Great Commission feeds into and empowers the fulfillment of the Great Commandment among God's children. The ultimate goal is to build disciples into those who obey above all the greatest commandment by loving God with their whole being, in a life and lifestyle of *worship*.

Church planting also needs to have worship (in its broadest sense) at its core—not just one of a list of church-sponsored activities, but a God-centered, vertical orientation to all of church life and ministry. Planting a church, building up the body, reaching the lost—each of these vital pursuits has by definition a people-oriented, horizontal component, and thus are just means to a much greater end. The glorifying of God's name must always be before us as our explicit goal and purpose. Our ultimate focus must be not on human needs but on God's worthiness (which in turn will help us to see human needs from His perspective).

We so easily lose the big picture with all of the things that clamor for our attention and energy! May God help us, in the midst of the rigors and the pressures of life (whether on the mission field or wherever), to keep ever before us a sense of wonder at the greatness of His glory. May those whom we serve see in us that God quenches the thirst in our own souls—that they might want to drink deeply as well. May our ministries awaken in people a deeper hunger for making Him central in their lives—that more and more people might "come and worship before You, O Lord . . . and glorify Your name."

SEE MANY RESOURCES AND LINKS RELATED TO WORSHIP AND MISSIONS, INCLUDING AN EXTENDED EXCERPT FROM JOHN PIPER'S EXCELLENT BOOK *LET THE NATIONS BE GLAD: THE SUPREMACY OF GOD IN MISSIONS*, ON THE "WORLDWIDE WORSHIP" PAGE AT WWW.WORR.ORG (LINK [HERE](#)).

TEXTS

on Worship and Missions

GOD'S CALL TO THE NATIONS

Praise the Lord, all nations; laud Him, all peoples! (Psalm 117:1)

GOD'S GOAL FOR THE NATIONS

God be gracious to us and bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us,
that Your way may be known on the earth, Your salvation among all nations.

Let the peoples praise You, O God; let all the peoples praise You.

Let the nations be glad and sing for joy;

for You will judge the peoples with uprightness and guide the nations on the earth.

Let the peoples praise You, O God; let all the peoples praise You.

The earth has yielded its produce; God, our God, blesses us.

God blesses us, that all the ends of the earth may fear Him. (Psalm 67)

Kings of the earth and all peoples, princes and all rulers of the earth!

Young men and maidens together, old men and children!

Let them praise the name of the Lord, for his name alone is exalted;

his majesty is above earth and heaven. (Psalm 148:11-13)

GOD'S SUFFICIENCY FOR THE NATIONS

“All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations will
worship before You. For the kingdom is the Lord's and He rules over the nations.” (Psalm 22:27)

“Cease striving and know that I am God;

I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.” (Psalm 46:10)

“All the earth will worship You, and will sing praises to You; they will sing praises to Your name.”

(Psalm 66:4)

“All nations whom You have made shall come and worship before You, O Lord,

And they shall glorify Your name.” (Psalm 86:9)

For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord,

as the waters cover the sea. (Habbakuk 2:14)

OUR ROLE

“Tell of His glory among the nations, His wonderful deeds among all the peoples.” (Psalm 96:3)

“O give thanks to the LORD, call upon His name;
make known His deeds among the peoples.” (Psalm 105:1)

QUOTABLES

Worldwide Worship

“The most crucial issue in missions—is the centrality of God in the life of the church. Where people are not stunned by the greatness of God, how can they be sent with the ringing message, ‘Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised; He is to be feared above all gods!’ (Psalm 96:4)?” (John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad*, 14)

“The ultimate missionary compulsion is not simply that there are people who are dying without knowing Christ, nor is it that God has given us the Great Commission to go out into the world; it is that there are areas of the world, whether here in Memphis or to the ends of the earth, where God is being *robbed of His glory*.” (Eric Alexander, “Worship God [Rev 19:10],” sermon)

“The highest of missionary motives is neither obedience to the Great Commission (important as that is), nor love for sinners who are alienated and perishing (strong as that incentive is, especially when we contemplate the wrath of God . . .), but rather zeal—burning and passionate zeal—for the glory of Jesus Christ.” (John Stott, *Romans: God’s Good News for the World*, 53)

“Almighty God, just because He is almighty, needs no support. The picture of a nervous, ingratiating God fawning over men to win their favor is not a pleasant one; yet if we look at the popular conception of God that is precisely what we see. Twentieth-century Christianity has put God on charity. So lofty is our opinion of ourselves that we find it quite easy, not to say enjoyable, to believe that we are necessary to God. But the truth is that God is not greater for our being, nor would He be less if we did not exist. That we do exist is altogether of God’s free determination, not by our desert nor by divine necessity.

“Probably the hardest thought of all for our natural egotism to entertain is that God does not

need our help. We commonly represent Him as a busy, eager, somewhat frustrated Father hurrying about seeking help to carry out His benevolent plan to bring peace and salvation to the world. . . . The God who worketh all things surely needs no help and no helpers.

“Too many missionary appeals are based upon this fancied frustration of Almighty God. An effective speaker can easily excite pity in his hearers, not only for the heathen but for the God who has tried so hard and so long to save them and has failed for want of support. I fear that thousands of young persons enter Christian service from no higher motive than to help deliver God from the embarrassing situation His love has gotten Him into and His limited abilities seem unable to get Him out of.” (A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*)

“The dynamism of God’s redemptive mission discovered in worship thrusts people into that mission as God’s coworkers. One writer declares that the most important moment in worship arrives when worshipers leave the sanctuary. At that time, whether or not worshipers have understood the meaning of the experience in which they have been involved becomes clear.” (Paul Waitman Hoon, *The Integrity of Worship: Ecumenical and Pastoral Studies in Liturgical Theology*, 136)

“Mission has rightly been tagged, ‘the resonance of liturgy.’” (Thomas J. Talley, “The Sacredness of Contemporary Worship,” in *Worship in the City of Man*, 38)

“The heart of mission flows in this amazing economy of glory: God reveals His glory to all nations in order to receive glory from all creation.” (Steven C. Hawthorne, “[The Story of His Glory](#),” *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, 36)

“The frightening freedom of worship in the New Testament is a missionary mandate. We must not lock this gospel treasure in any cultural strait-jacket. Rather let us find the place, the time, the dress, the forms, the music that kindles and carries a passion for the supremacy of God in all things. And may our communion with the living God be so real and the Spirit of God so powerfully present that the heart of what we do becomes the joy of all the peoples we are called to reach.”

(John Piper, “Jesus: Mediator of a Better Covenant [pt.1],” sermon)

“Where the missionaries got their newly translated Scriptures sung in indigenous music forms, the churches grew rapidly; where not, they grew more slowly.”

(Wycliffe Bible Translators)

“God is calling us above all else to be the kind of people whose theme and passion is the supremacy of God in all of life. No one will be able to rise to the magnificence of the missionary cause who does not feel the magnificence of Christ. There will be no big world vision without a big God. There will be no passion to draw others into our worship where there is no passion for worship.”

(John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad*, 40)

“God has promised to get obedient glory for Himself from every tribe and tongue. He yearns for the unique outpouring of love, righteousness, wisdom and worship that can come from every people.”

(Steven C. Hawthorne, “The Story of His Glory,” in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, 46)

“A theology of mission is worked out, in large part, in our primary theology, which is to say, in our worship. We will not be able to be faithful to our mission if we neglect those central things that shape our identity and distinguish us from the many religious and secular options.”

(Ronald P. Byars, *The Future of Protestant Worship*, 46)

“Because worship is the enjoyment of the gospel, it is a boundless source of inspiration for the mission of communicating the gospel to the world and establishing the gospel in the world.” (Christopher Cocksworth, *Holy, Holy, Holy*, 210)

“God is looking for worshipers, and worshipers of a particular quality—those who will worship in spirit and truth. Now this is the mission that Jesus came to make possible. The aim of missions is to bring about the obedience of faith among all the unreached peoples of the world. But that is not the ultimate goal. The ultimate goal—even of faith and obedience—is ‘for the sake of his name.’ The fame of Christ, the reputation of Christ is what burned in the heart of the apostle Paul. The faith of the nations was not an end in itself. It was the way that the name of Christ would be honored. This is what filled him with such a passion for the Great Commission.”

(John Piper, *The Pleasures of God*, 110)

“The mission of the church in the world is grounded in the mission of the Son and the Spirit from the Father to bring us to sonship and communion.”

(James B. Torrance, *Worship, Community and the Triune God of Grace*, 75)

“We cannot be otherwise than a worshipping community and a missionary people because we have been adopted into the life of God.”

(Christopher Cocksworth, *Holy, Holy, Holy*, 202)

“Jesus’ primary concern—the very first petition of the prayer he teaches—is that more and more people, and more and more peoples, come to hallow God’s name. This is the reason the universe exists. Missions exists because hallowing doesn’t.”

(John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad*, 35)

“The ascending Lord sends His disciples to the ends of the earth with the mission of calling the nations to join the saints and angels in heaven’s praise.”

(Edmund P. Clowney, “Kingdom Evangelism” in *The Pastor-Evangelist*)

“In Acts 13, before the first missionary journey, we find the church united in worship . . . and showing their earnestness by fasting. It is in such a context that the Spirit could make known his leading. . . . The mission from Antioch was born in that time of worship where the Spirit of God was so signally present.”

(Michael Green, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 106-7)

“God reveals glory to all nations in order that He might receive glory from people through worship.”

(Steven C. Hawthorne, “The Story of His Glory,” in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, 35)

“The Bible is the astounding drama of God’s love drawing the worship of the nations.”

(Steven C. Hawthorne, “The Story of His Glory,” in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, 37)

“This remarkable vision of God as one who ‘exalts himself to show mercy’ (Isaiah 30:18) impels world missions in more ways than one. One way we have not pondered is the sheer uniqueness of this God among all the gods of the nations. Isaiah realizes this and says, ‘From of old no one has heard or perceived by the ear, no eye has seen a God besides Thee, who works for those who wait for him’ (Isaiah 64:4). In other words, Isaiah is stunned that the greatness of God has the paradoxical effect that He does not need people to work for Him, but rather magnifies Himself by working for them, if they will renounce self-reliance and ‘wait for Him.’ . . . The uniqueness at the heart of Christianity is the glory of God manifest in the freedom of grace. God is glorious because He does not need the nations to work for Him. He is free to work for them. ‘The Son of man came not to be served but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many (Mark 10:45).’”

(John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad*, 31-32)

“Witness without worship is perjury.”

(Adrian Rogers)

“Worship and mission are so bound together in the economy of God that you really cannot have one without the other. The reason for this is that true worship is rendering to God the glory which is due his holy name. And this is the great end and purpose for which all things exist. God created the world as a theater in which to display his glory. He created man and woman in order that they might reflect the image of his glory. He sent Jesus in order that the glory of God might be seen in the face of Jesus Christ. He redeemed sinners in order that they may be changed into the image of his glory. There is nothing beyond this for us: it is the terminus of everything in the universe. And that is why worship is the highest employment of our faculties: it focuses on the glory of God.

“But when we come to know God, we discover that he is jealous for his glory. He will not give it to another, nor his praise to graven images. He desires his glory to be declared among the heathen (Ps 96:3). Do you see the logical corollary which must be drawn from these premises? No Christian man or woman worshipping God and desiring his glory can be unmoved by the fact that there are areas of the world and nations where God is being robbed of his glory. That is why true worship and true mission always go together, and it is why the glory of God is the only ultimate missionary motive. There are, of course, others: compassion for the lost, obedience to the Great Commission and so on. But these are not the ultimate motive. The ultimate motive is the glory of God. . . .

“I think you and I would have to confess that in the contemporary church and in our own hearts there is little of this deeply felt emotion of a burning jealousy for the glory of God. And I am persuaded that this is the root cause of our relative indifference to the missionary task. . . .

“We need to remind ourselves again and again that worship without a missionary burden is humbug. . . . Mission and worship belong together. No one can truly worship God and at the same time have an apparently total indifference to whether anyone else is worshipping him or not.” (Eric Alexander, “[Mission and Vision](#)” [Urbana 1981])

(new feature)

SING TO THE LORD

Reflections on Congregational Song

KNOW WHAT YOU'RE SINGING!

There are great riches to be found in the hymnody of the church. It has been pointed out that in the intervening centuries since these songs were written there has been a natural “winnowing process” whereby much (though certainly not all) of the “chaff” has been eliminated, and only the better hymns have endured. It will be interesting to see which of the current repertoire of contemporary songs will likewise stand the test of time.

One of the cautions, though, which we must bring to using these great expressions of the faith is to be aware that the poetic language, which can add so greatly to their impact, can sometimes also obscure their meaning when there are archaic words (or meanings of words) which are no longer in current use. We certainly don't want to use in worship language which may “sound holy” but does clearly communicate what the author had in mind. Paul advocates intelligible songs of praise when he declares, “I will sing praise with my spirit, but I will sing with my mind also” (1 Cor 14:15). When it comes to old hymns, it might sometimes seem like we should put dictionaries into the pew racks! A better solution is for us as leaders to take care to explain to and educate our people so that they understand what they are singing.

AN EXAMPLE

“Praise to the Lord, the Almighty” (text by Joachim Neander)

Interesting but totally irrelevant side note: Joachim Neander was such a prominent German hymnwriter of the 17th century that he had a valley (German *Thal*) renamed after him. It was in this valley that the prehistoric remains now known as “Neanderthal Man” were discovered in 1856! *And you thought that doxology and paleontology had nothing in common!!*

It is, however, extremely doubtful that this hymn story would anything at all to enhance the worship of the congregation if we were to share it in the service . . .

The last sentence of this great, majestic hymn reads:

*Let the Amen sound from His people again:
Gladly for **aye** we adore Him.*

The archaic “aye” means, according to the dictionary, “always, continually, ever.” Interestingly, *Word's Hymnal for Worship and Celebration* (1986) is pretty conservative on such matters,

in this case preserving the original wording. Most hymnals (and contemporary adaptations) since, however, have changed the last phrase to read either, “Gladly forever adore Him” (*The Worshiping Church, Celebration Hymnal*, Lutheran and Methodist hymnals, etc.) or “Gladly fore’er we adore Him” (*Trinity Hymnal*). Though I’m not in favor of most alterations of hymn texts, in this case it would seem to be perfectly legitimate to change the last phrase in this way—since the change is so slight, does not change the meaning or disturb the poetic flow, and eliminates the need for printed or verbal explanation of the meaning.

However, others have chosen to preserve the original wording (including “Passion: Hymns Ancient and Modern” and the [RUF \[Reformed University Fellowship\] Hymnal](#)). This is certainly acceptable *as long as the meaning is explained*. Many will instinctively figure it out anyway, but we cannot take this for granted. We need to always make every effort to make sure people understand what they are singing.

There is another issue related to using the original text, however, that is sometimes missed even by the purists who go that route: that’s the issue of pronunciation. The correct pronunciation for THIS archaic meaning of “aye” (as opposed to the use as in “Aye, aye, capt’n!”) is (again according to the dictionary) *with a long “a”* (as in “way”) instead of with a long “i”. (In other words, we should sing, “Gladly for aye [ā] we adore Him.”)

So if we’re going to use the original text, we should also use the correct pronunciation, and we will have to teach the congregation this as well.

Link [HERE](#) to **WORSHIPBOOKS** to order important books on worship

COMING NEXT MONTH:

REFORMATION SUNDAY:
It’s not just for Lutherans!



WORSHIP NOTES is a free monthly online digest of reflections, views, news and reviews concerning biblical worship. It is produced by Ron Man as a publication of *Worship Resources*, a department of Greater Europe Mission devoted to “strengthening the body of Christ in the U.S., Europe and around the world by promoting the priority, understanding and practice of God-centered, Christ-exalting, Biblically-based worship.” To subscribe, please go to www.worr.org and click on “Worship Notes” at the top. There are many other free resources on the website also.